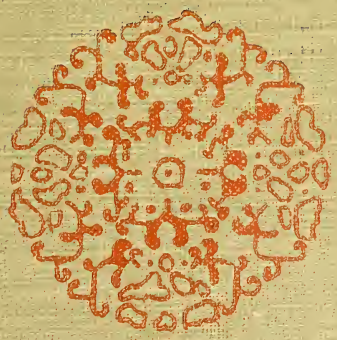
THE MYSTERY OF THE ORIENTAL RUG



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THE MYSTERY OF THE ORIENTAL RUG

THE MYSTERY OF THE RUG
THE PRAYER RUG
SOME ADVICE TO PURCHASERS OF ORIENTAL RUGS

BY

DR. G. GRIFFIN LEWIS

AUTHOR OF "THE PRACTICAL BOOK OF ORIENTAL RUGS"

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR, 30 ILLUSTRATIONS IN HALF-TONE, AND TEXT DECORATIONS

PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
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1914

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INTRODUCTION

The three articles of which this monograph is composed were written for magazine publication, but upon due reflection the author has, instead, deemed it advisable to publish them all under one cover; first, because of the kindly reception which the public accorded his first effort, "The Practical Book of Oriental Rugs"; second, because of the popular demand for a low-priced book on the subject; and, finally, because these articles contain information which is found in no other book, and which should be of special interest to those who know little of rugs and who are desirous of learning something without too much research.

Those who wish to pursue the subject further would do well to read the work above referred to, while those who have already done so will find this one an interesting and useful supplement.

In this monograph the author has endeavored to present in a concise form certain facts that may enable the novice to more fully understand and appreciate the beauty and interest attached to these treasures of the Orient, and hopes that it will serve well the purpose which prompted its creation.

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THE MYSTERY OF THE RUG

THE MYSTERY OF THE RUG

SEATED by the fireside with your feet upon the hearth rug of silken sheen, did you ever indulge in reveries and enchanting dreams as you gazed upon its glorious vista of color harmony?

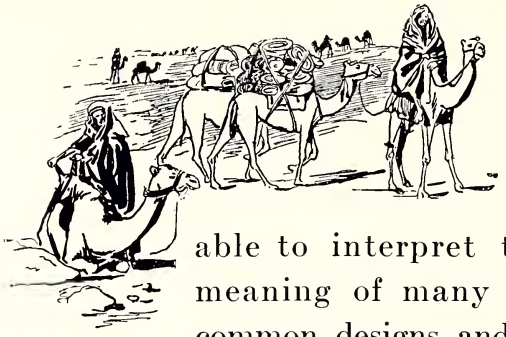
If it was endowed with the gift of speech what a wonderfully interesting story it could tell of romance, adventure, deprivation or, perhaps, tragedy! Was it woven by the barbarous nomad in his mountain tent, by the Persian in his adobe hut, or by the Anatolian maiden as a dowry for her future lord and master?

The history of many of these gems of the Eastern loom is, to a certain extent, legible in their weave, designs and colors. Every rug

has a story of its own written in one of the many dialects of the world of imagination and tradition. It may reveal history, family and tribal legends or the elevation and decline of nations.

There are old masters in wool as well as on canvas, each one of which has its own individuality, carrying with it an air of Oriental splendor, being full of mystic folk lore and telling much of a bygone people and religion. He who loves them and has a knowledge of the countries from which they come and the people who made them, not only appreciates their true value and mystic charm, but understands more or less the deep and confusing symbolism of the various colors and designs, every one of which has a meaning, though they may not always be understood by the weavers who employ them at the present day. Without a doubt many of these well-known designs have been transmitted from the earliest days and were associated with the different religions of the time, such for instance as that of the ancient fire and sun worshippers, which even to-day have a few devotees in parts of Persia.

No. 1. SYMBOLIC PERSIAN PRAYER RUG



By comparison and patient study the connoisseur has been able to interpret the symbolic meaning of many of the more common designs and thus become acquainted with some of the traditions and associations connected with them, but if a more general knowledge of their symbolism could be acquired it would greatly add charm and interest and make a rug more valuable even than would its harmonious and beautifully blended colors.

It seems perfectly natural that the Oriental, who is so passionately fond of symbols, should profusely weave them into his fabrics, and so it is that in many of these rugs the individuality of the maker is so clearly expressed. Even the little children, intent upon following certain outlines of patterns peculiar to their locality, give a distinct individuality to each rug by mistakes and additions of their own. Likewise sudden changes in designs and colors frequently

No. 2. A SIXTEENTH CENTURY PERSIAN RUG

show the imprint of more than one pair of hands. Sometimes these changes are absolutely abrupt, but more frequently they are similar but inexact, as though the new weaver was endeavoring to adapt his own method of weaving to that of his predecessor.

There are many innovations in rug weaving which are of deep significance to the Eastern mind, such for instance as a lock of human hair woven in as a love message, a few tufts of unclipped nap which are supposed to bring good luck, or a bead or two to guard against the evil eye, the belief in which is one of the most fixed of Eastern superstitions.

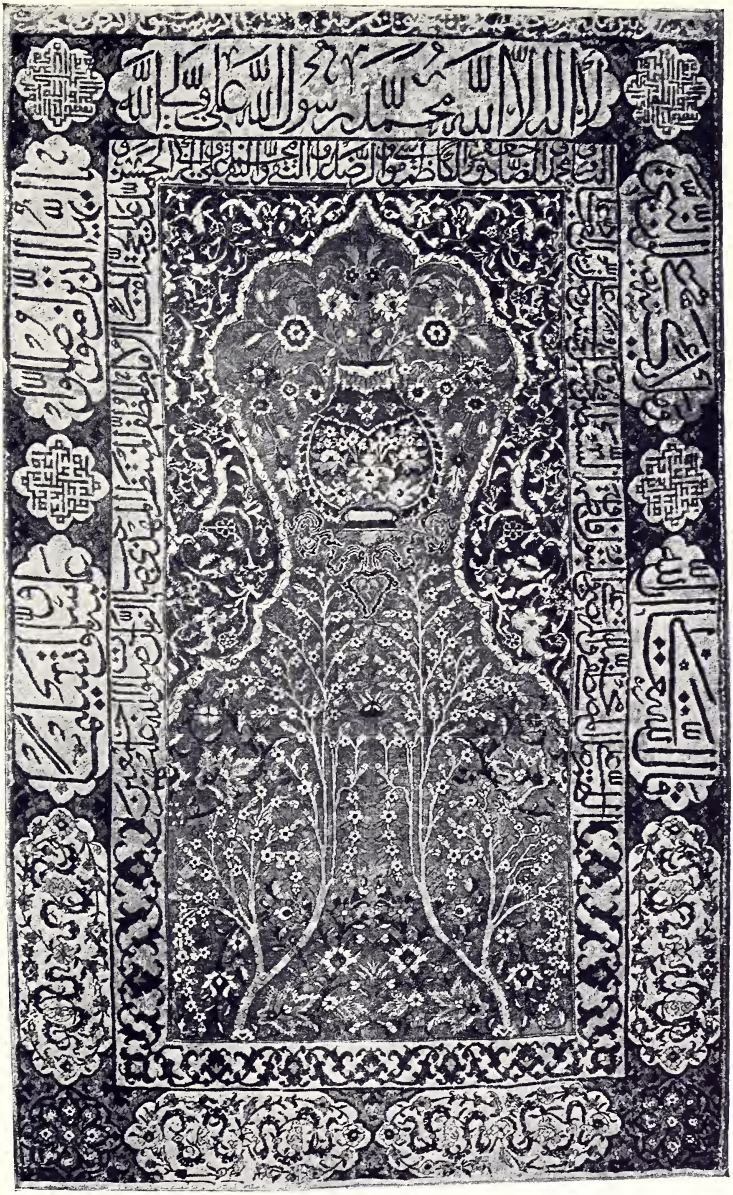
The irregularity of design, which may appear to be the result of accident or carelessness, is frequently the intentional work of some devout weaver to emphasize his belief that nothing but Allah can be perfect.

Inscriptions are frequently employed. They are usually in the Arabic language, which is quite generally understood throughout the Orient, and they are, as a rule, either quotations from the Koran or verses of some famous Eastern poet.

No. 3. CHINESE ZODIACAL RUG

The Oriental is passionately fond of flowers, his idea of Paradise being likened to a huge flower garden. He therefore weaves into his rugs flowers of every description, especially those which flourish in his native land, such as the lotus, the iris or lily, the poppy, the rose, the carnation, the chrysanthemum, and the peony, all of which have their symbolisms generally following that of their color.

The Persians, the Chinese and the Caucasians, being liberal or Sheed Mohammedans, weave all sorts of figures of birds, animals and men into their rugs, but the Turks, being conservative or Sunnite Mohammedans, never weave forms of living creatures or beings, as it is forbidden by the Koran for fear it might lead to idolatry; besides, it is their belief that if they make a form of any living thing they will be expected, in the day of judgment, to endow it with a soul. For the same reason, pictures containing forms of animals and men are never found in Turkish homes. The Turkomans and Beluchees are not as liberal as the Persians or as conservative as the Turks. They only occasionally weave forms of animate objects.



No. 4. PERSIAN PRAYER RUG

From the earliest time a great deal of importance has been attached by the people of the East to the symbolic significance of colors, which form no small part of the cabalistic meaning of designs. Among the Mohammedans green stands for immortality and is regarded as a sacred color. For this reason it was seldom employed by the orthodox Mohammedan in weaving until within the last decade or so. This is why so few antique Turkish rugs are found with green, excepting an occasional one of the prayer variety.

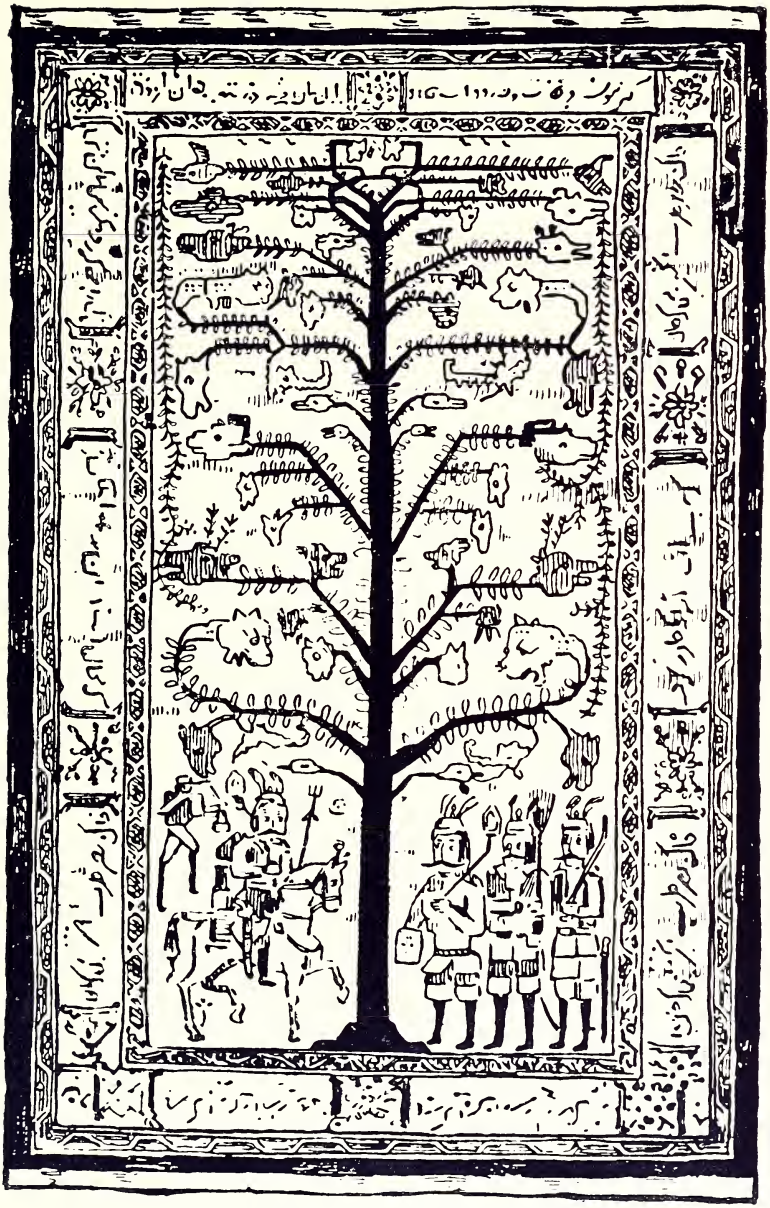
Red is the Mohammedan color for joy, while with the Chinese it is the emblem of truth, virtue and sincerity. It is used quite generally in costumes and decorations for festivities, especially the marriage ceremony. Blue in Persia symbolizes the air. Among the Mongols it is the emblem of authority or power, and nearly throughout the Orient it is employed to counteract evil influences. Every horse, camel

No. 5. PERSIAN SILK RUG

and donkey either wears a string of blue beads around its neck or has a few tied to its mane or tail to keep away disease and misfortune. Yellow is the Chinese color of royalty, robes of yellow being worn by the members of the royal family. Purple also has always been associated with royalty and accepted as the sign of imperial power. White has ever been accepted as symbolic of innocence of soul, of purity of thought, of holiness of life. Hence the priests of the great divinity Osiris were robed in white, and thus, too, were the priests of Zeus. Black, suggestive of the material darkness and gloom that follows the withdrawal of the cheering light of day, is a meet symbol of the spiritual darkness of the soul unillumined by the sun of righteousness. Orange symbolizes resignation and piety, and rose divine wisdom.

A knowledge of the designs, colors and methods of weaving is no more interesting and fascinating than is a knowledge of the uses for which the rugs were woven.

It has long been a Turkish custom for a girl, as soon as she becomes engaged, to weave a rug to present to her future husband. It is her dowry



No. 6. SYMBOLIC KIRMAN RUG (Persian)

or marriage gift, and as it is a work of love, with dreams, hopes and fancies for inspiration, the materials, colors and designs must be selected with the constant thought of her lover and the workmanship must be the best she is capable of giving.

It is a very old custom to cover the dead before interment and the grave after interment with a rug instead of with flowers. These grave rugs are usually the combined handiwork of all the members of the family and nearly always have the tree design, usually the cypress, which is symbolic of immortality.

The hearth or guest rug is always spread before the fire upon the arrival of a guest, and once a fugitive, fleeing from his enemies, enters a tent and sets his foot upon the hearth rug, the owner and his people are bound to defend him. Even among the wild mountaineers to whom a human life counts for little, guesthood is sacred.

The bath rug is usually presented to the bride by her parents on her wedding day.

Rugs have always been used for religious purposes as altar cloths, canopies, wall decorations in the mosques and as spreads on which to kneel in prayer. Every devout disciple of the Prophet

owns a prayer rug on which he kneels five times a day when the hour for prayer arrives.

It is still the custom in some parts of the Orient to give rugs to the mosques as thank offerings for special blessings received, and frequently the Mohammedan bequeaths a rug, when he dies, to the mosque where he worshipped. Every Mohammedan is supposed to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during his life, at which time he usually takes one of his masterpieces as a gift to the mosque. Such pieces, woven with great religious zeal, usually represent the best dyes, materials and workmanship that the district possesses.

It is quite evident that to the Oriental the rug is an indispensable companion in his home life, in his social life, in his spiritual life and finally in his death.

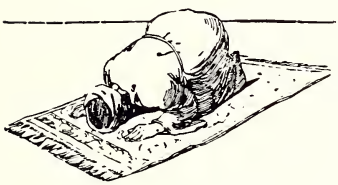
Taking this into consideration, together with the fact that these woven masterpieces, which come from the mysterious recesses of Asia, are but pages of a picture language, which unfold themselves like the plot of a story, is it strange that he who reads them is fascinated?

THE PRAYER RUG

THE PRAYER RUG

A Temple rug, with a niche for prayer
That my lord's dark knees oft pressed;
The shield, the comb and the crescent there,
Are symbols his tribe was wont to wear,
Mine the weaving? then mine the prayer;
May Allah guard his rest.

RUTH GUTHRIE HARDING

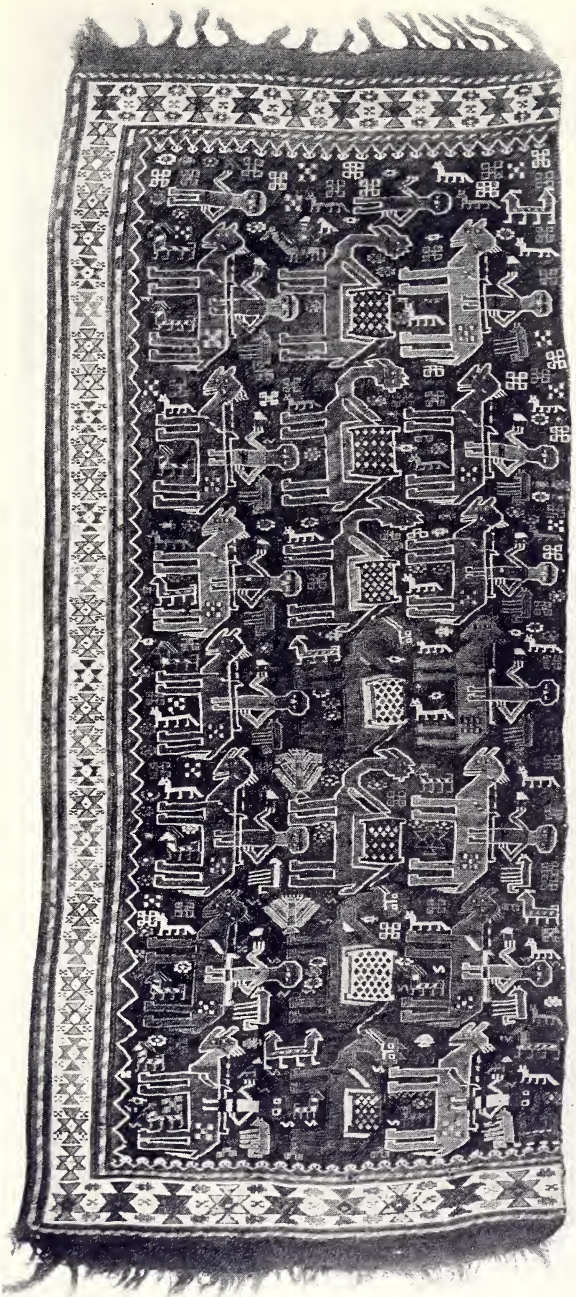


THE Namazlik or prayer rug, which from its associations is decidedly the most interesting example of any class of textile fabrics, and which has very appropriately been called "a creed in color," originated with the Mohammedans of Asia Minor for the purpose, no doubt, of providing the worshipper with a clean place on which to offer prayers, as it is unlawful for the Moslem to kneel on an unclean place; therefore the prayer rug is his constant companion at home and abroad.

Every faithful follower of the Prophet owns one, more or less valuable, according to his means, which he clings to devoutly and upon

which he prostrates himself five times a day; at daybreak, nine A. M., noon, five P. M., and eight P. M., at which hours the Muezzins from the balconies of the minarets issue the call to prayer. In obedience to the laws of the Koran, he first removes all money, jewelry and ornaments from his person in order that he may appear before God in the most abject humility; then, after combing his beard, he spreads his rug with its niche pointed toward Mecca, that hallowed city whither, tradition tells us, King Solomon was transported upon a fabulous green carpet, and whence more than three hundred years later Mohammed made his pilgrimage.

After placing a cake of dried earth from this holy city in the angle of the niche, he sits upon the lower portion of the rug with his heels close together, outstretches his hands and reverently prostrates himself with his forehead resting upon the sacred earth so that the law of the Koran that "the head must be bowed to the ground" might be carried out. In this



No. 7. SHEMAKHA OR SUMAK HUNTING RUG

position nothing will interfere or distract his attention from his worship as he repeats some verses from the Koran; or, more frequently, the following: "In the name of God, the compassionate compassioner, Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds, the compassionate compassioner, the Sovereign of the day of judgment. Thee do we worship and of Thee do we beg assistance. Direct us in the right way; in the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, on whom there is no wrath and who go not astray."

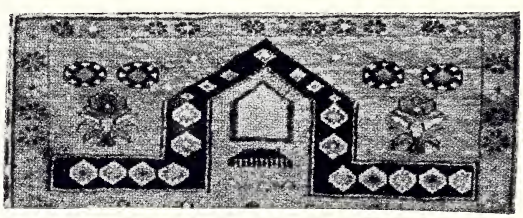
The niche of the prayer rug is intended to represent the mihrab or upper arch of a Mohammedan mosque, all of which are built with their axes extended in the direction of Mecca. This niche varies in shape according to the style of mosque architecture in the locality from which the rug comes; thus in Persia it is usually composed of curved lines, while in Asia Minor, Turkestan and the Caucasus it is severely rectilinear. Those of the Persian and Turkish classes are pointed, while those of the Caucasian and Turkoman classes may be either pointed or flat on the top, more frequently the latter.

No. 8. KABISTAN RUG (Caucasian)

The colors and decorative character also vary in different localities. Frequently a mosque lamp of floral design hangs from the niche, on either side of which are two columns intended

no doubt to represent the two large altar candles of the mosque. Cross panels, either above or below, or both above and below the prayer field, are frequently found in many of the Turkish pieces, but seldom in those of any other class.

In size, prayer rugs vary from two and one-half to four feet wide by four and one-half to six feet long. Small ones are frequently made for children, and occasionally one is found with



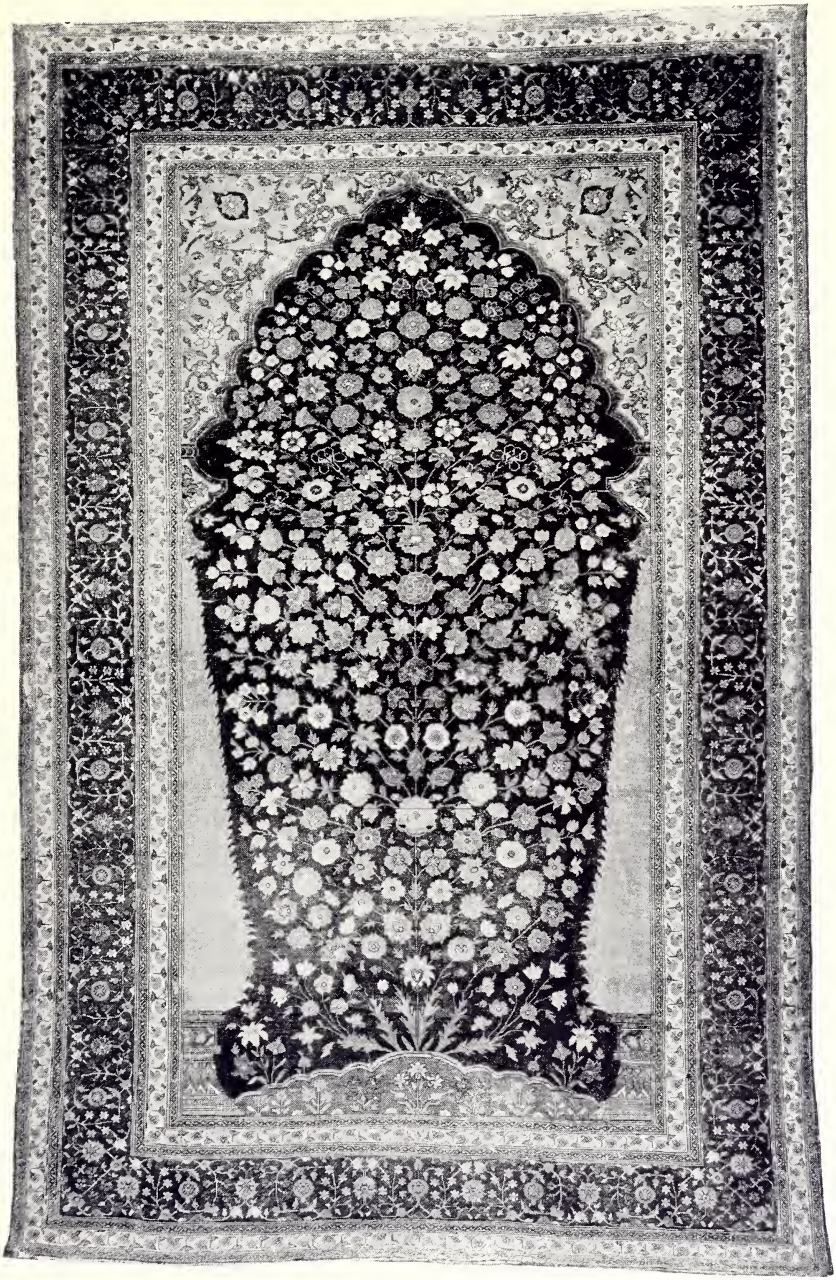
two or more niches, as if intended for a whole family. Sometimes the owner's name and frequently special emblems of local significance are worked into the rug, especially in and around the niche, such for instance as the articles used

No. 9. CHINESE RUG

by the pious Mohammedan, like the compass with which he determines the direction of Mecca, the comb with which he combs his beard, or the Moslem rosary consisting of ninety-nine beads, one for each of the ninety-nine names of Allah. Frequently the form of a hand is woven on each side of the niche, which are suggestive that the worshipper's hands be placed there while praying, and in many of the Turkish and Caucasian pieces there is a small rhomboidal figure just above the niche where the suppliant places the bit of earth which he has brought from Mecca. There are never any representations of animate beings, either in the designs of the rug or in the places where the Mohammedans exercise their devotions, this being forbidden by God, and any prayers offered where such figures are to be seen are devoid of merit.

The women are not permitted to join in public prayers at the mosque, but must offer their devotion in private places and never before men.

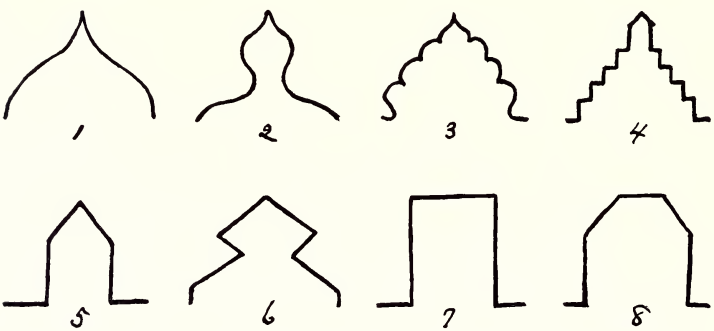
Some authorities claim that there are prayer rugs of every weave. This may be true, as the Mohammedans are scattered well over all the



No. 10. INDIAN FLORAL PRAYER RUG

rug making countries, but as accurately as we can ascertain Hamadan and Saraband prayer rugs are never seen in America, while Shiraz, Chichi, Feraghan, Senna, Meshed, Bijar and Shemakha prayer rugs are rarely seen.

The following sketch of some of the most common forms of the prayer niche will be of material assistance to the reader in differentiating.



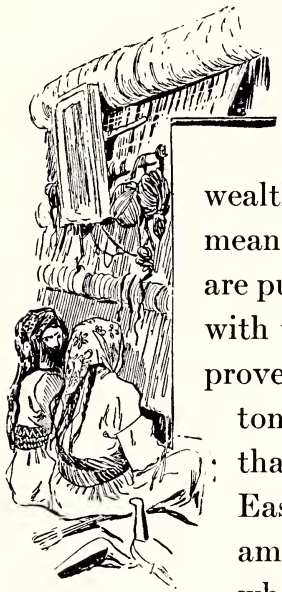
PERSIAN, 1, 2 and 3: TURKISH, 4, 5, 6 and 8; CAUCASIAN, 5, 7 and 8; TURKOMAN, 5 and 7

The great majority of prayer rugs seen in this country were made solely for trade and not for religious purposes. This is especially true of the Persian pieces; the Mohammedans of that country, being more scrupulous than those of the other rug making countries, are unwilling that their "Namazliks" be tramped on by the

feet of infidels. These commercial pieces may be most attractive in color, design and workmanship, but they do not possess the interest of some of the old pieces in which the well-worn nap shows where the devotee's knees and hands have pressed for several generations. Such pieces are very desirable to possess on account of their excellent workmanship, their artistic designs and color combinations, their rapidly increasing value, and, finally, because of the romance and sentiment which they arouse, for surely they have not only served the faithful Mohammedan in his response to the call of prayer, but they must embody many a prayer in their very texture.

SOME ADVICE TO PURCHASERS OF ORIENTAL RUGS

SOME ADVICE TO PURCHASERS OF ORIENTAL RUGS



THIRTY-FIVE or forty years ago few American homes possessed even one Oriental rug, but now, not only the wealthy but people of moderate means have become interested and are purchasing them in accordance with their resources. This fact is proven by the United States custom house statistics, which show that the importation of the Eastern rugs previous to 1892 amounted to $300,000 annually, whereas, at the present time, it is in the neighborhood of $5,000,000 with a steady increase each year.

The increasing use of hard wood and mosaic floors, even in buildings of moderate cost, also calls for their more general use; besides, the once prevalent idea that they were intended only for the wealthy is rapidly being discarded and the

people are beginning to realize that in the end, good, well-selected Oriental rugs make as cheap a floor covering as anything in the textile class. Money paid for good rugs is well expended, for with age they improve in color and sheen as well as in value. This is due in part to the fact that in the Orient the wool is so prepared that little of its animal fat is destroyed and also to its treatment with vegetable dyes, which have a tendency to preserve the elasticity of the wool fibre instead of making it brittle as do the aniline dyes. Stocks may fluctuate and may depreciate in value, but good Oriental rugs, if purchased at a fair price, will do neither.

It is a mistaken idea that the more modern and cheaper rugs are always inferior in wearing qualities to the older and more expensive pieces. In many instances they are superior. The wearing qualities do not depend so much upon the number of knots to the square inch as they do upon the length of the pile and the manner in which the knots are tied, those which are tied tightly being more durable than those which are loosely tied and those with a long nap being equally more durable than those with a short

No. 11. PERSIAN SILK PRAYER RUG

nap. Strange as it may seem, the majority of the more expensive pieces have a short nap, while the majority of the less expensive pieces have a long nap. In the former, where the nap is so short, the knots must be tied closer together in order to hold well.

Nothing adds more to the beauty of the home than do Oriental rugs, when carefully chosen with reference to designs and colors. They impart richness, represent refinement and have a distinct individuality.

Remarkable as it may seem, the people have been accustomed to paying good prices for

No. 12. ANATOLIAN PRAYER RUG

Oriental rugs without knowing anything about them further than to be able to recognize certain types like the Bokhara with its characteristic octagon or the Saraband with its familiar pear design, which have become so well known that they are easily recognized.

The buyer hitherto has selected what pleased him most, depending entirely upon the sagacity of the dealer often to learn later that he had been sadly defrauded. The problem of rug buying is therefore a complicated one which, in many instances, is fraught with perplexity and disappointment. Of course, a connoisseur could be called upon to assist in the selection, but it would be better for one before purchasing to acquire some knowledge of the characteristics of the more common varieties as well as the different means employed in examining them. This can be easily and quickly done by consulting some practical book on the subject which is reliable, concise and interestingly written. Such a book will stimulate an interest and create many rug enthusiasts, while the dishonest methods of selling rugs will only become unprofitable with the increase of the essential knowledge among buyers.

No. 13. CHILD'S PRAYER RUG (Daghestan)

Western intercourse is making rapid advance upon the conservatism of the Orient, demanding rugs of Oriental weave but with Occidental dyes and, to a certain extent, designs also. Some dealers who are honest and who know will honorably tell you whether a rug is chemically dyed or not, while many others, knowing the average buyer is unable to tell for himself, either fail to say or deliberately lie. It is this sort of dealing that has inspired so great distrust of the Oriental trade, and many innocent dealers have suffered with the guilty.

The novice is unable to make a fair comparison of prices, as frequently rugs, which appear to him to be quite alike and equally valuable, may be far apart in actual worth. First of all, he should protect himself by patronizing a good, reliable, well-established firm in whose fair dealings he has confidence, then be willing to consider their advice. He should shun dealers who do not mark the price upon each piece and he should not expect to find good rugs among the badly washed and second-class stocks of the itinerant auctioneer.

No. 14. MELES PRAYER RUG (Turkish)

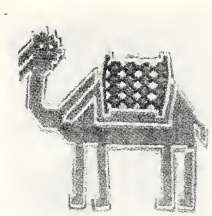
Frequently dealers mark rugs according to their attractiveness in designs and colors instead of according to their real worth from a standpoint of materials, dyes and workmanship. Therefore, one who is a connoisseur may frequently obtain good, honest pieces at the same prices he would have to pay for inferior pieces.

The average buyer, however, will, nine times out of ten, select the "doctored" pieces and pass over the honest ones, as they are somewhat brighter and do not appeal to his artistic taste as much as do the ones whose colors have been artificially subdued. Realizing this fact, the great majority of importers have 95 per cent. of

No. 15. MESHED PRAYER RUG (Persian)
Tree of Life Design

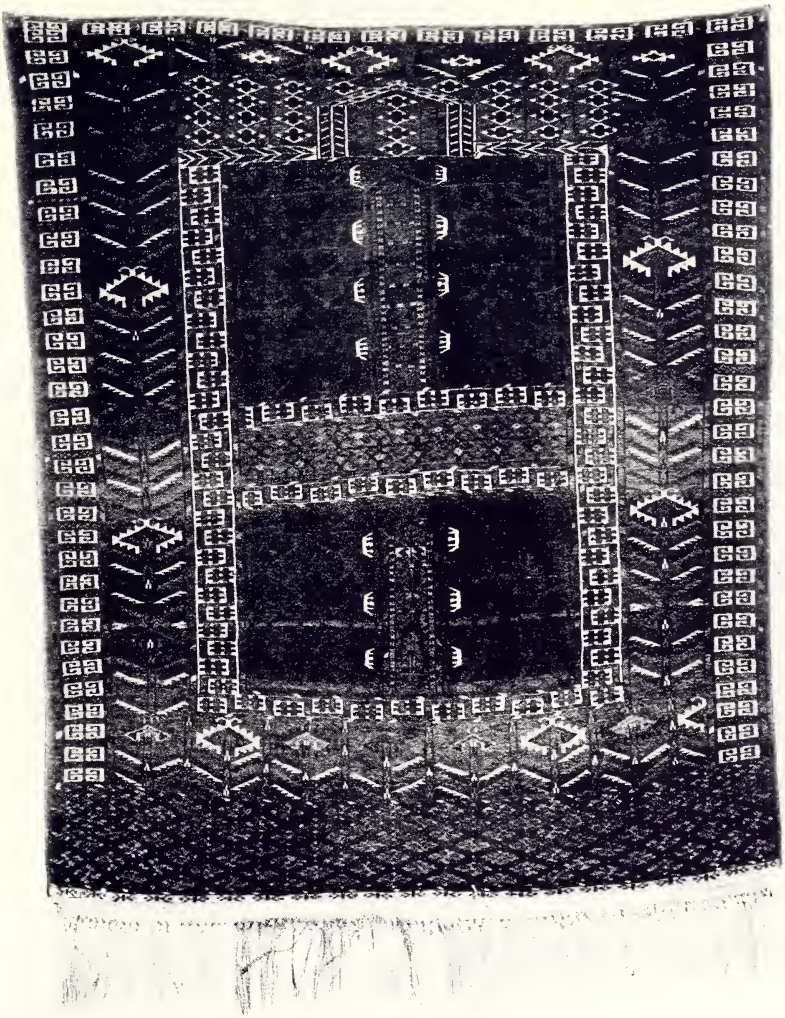
their rugs chemically washed in a solution of chloride of lime. Some time ago the writer inspected the large stock of a prominent New York importer and, before leaving, congratulated him upon the large number of "undoctored" pieces which he had. The dealer's reply was, "If you had called a week later you could not have offered your congratulations, as nearly every 'undoctored' piece here goes into the wash to-morrow." He further stated that he seldom could sell rugs until the colors had been chemically subdued and the artificial sheen had been established. This being true, we can hardly blame those houses, which have large expenses and great competition, for catering to the public demand. Occasionally, however, we meet with a dealer whose artistic love is stronger than his desire for gain. Some time ago I called upon a prominent Fifth Avenue dealer. In response to my card he presented himself in person. I told him that I wished to look at some rugs. He immediately ushered me into a small room at the back of the store, where he showed me a beautiful assortment of antique pieces. Being unable to find

No. 16. BESHIR BOKHARA PRAYER RUG (TURKOMAN)



one of the desired size, I asked as we passed through the main store, which was filled with rugs of all sizes, "Do you suppose you could find anything here?" His reply was that every piece in that room was "doctored," that he would show them to no one, but left that distasteful task to his clerks.

Few dealers, with the exception of an occasional large one, ever handle antiques. For such we must go to those who specialize in them. Dealers in antiques are comparatively few and are becoming fewer each year, as the antiques are rapidly becoming scarce. Ten years ago, when wool was more plentiful and time was of little value in the Orient, the supply of old pieces seemed inexhaustible and they could be had at moderate cost, as the people of the East were willing to dispose of their old rugs when there were plenty of weavers ready to make new ones. To-day, however, it is quite different, and old pieces are difficult to find at any price. Importers of all countries have sent their representatives into the Orient, who have made a



No. 17. TEKKE BOKHARA PRAYER RUG (Turkoman)

house to house canvass, buying up all the good old pieces with which the people were willing to part, and within the last few years, according to a prominent authority, many of these old pieces have been bought back by traders from Constantinople and taken back east to be sold over again to western purchasers at many times the original price. Old rugs seem to vanish in classes; for instance, five years ago choice Sarabands could be had in abundance; to-day we may search many wholesale stocks without finding a single one, and when they are found they cost many times what they did five years ago.

For the past few years the Bokharas have been plentiful and now they are beginning to grow more scarce. In a few years they will be as difficult to find as the Sarabands now are.

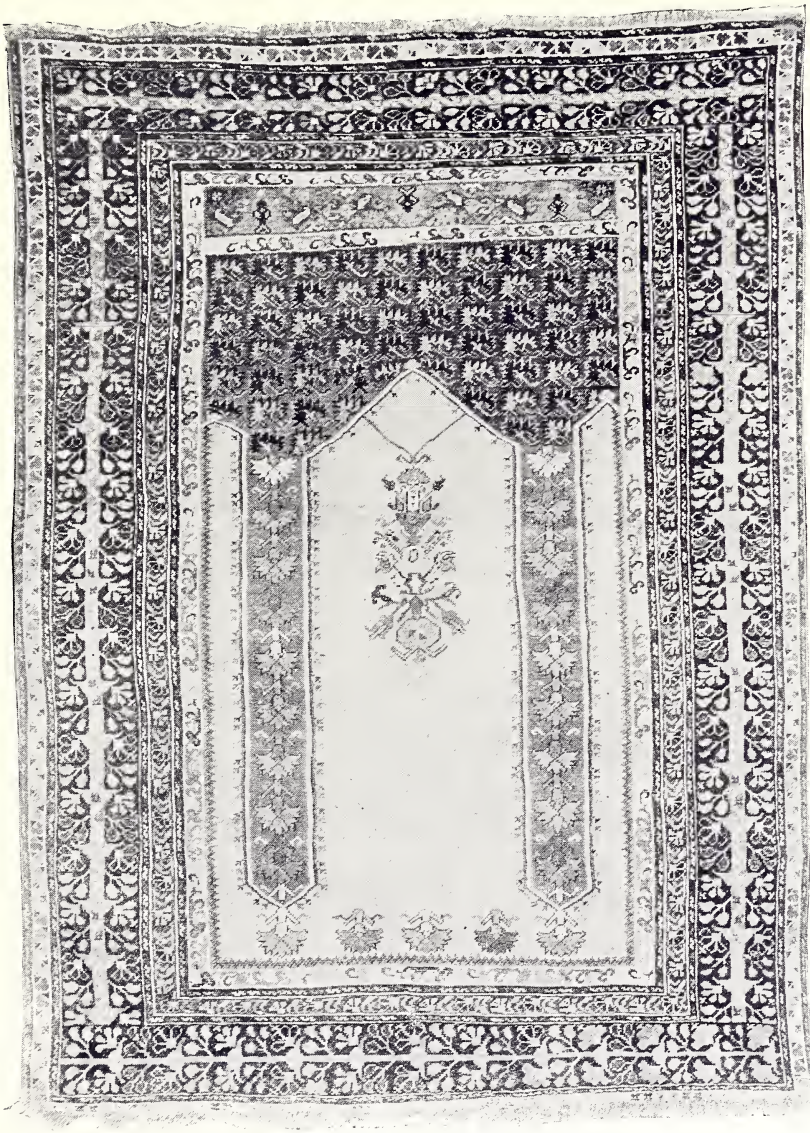
The best rugs for the money now on the market are the Kurdish products. Most of them are honestly made and honestly dyed, being of good material and with a long nap, which greatly enhances their wearing qualities, and they can be purchased anywhere from $1.00 to $3.00 a square foot.

No. 18. KARABAGH PRAYER RUG WITH DATE (Caucasian)

There are three essential requisites of every rug: namely, good material, good dyes, and good workmanship. Select those which please you most in size, color and design, then take time and examine them thoroughly by daylight. First, see if they lie straight and flat; examine their condition and see if they are moth-eaten, if the nap is badly worn or if the warp or woof threads are broken in places; turn them over and note if any repairs have been made. Inspect the foundation threads, as sometimes they rot and will tear with slight torsion. Examine the material of the warp, woof and pile, noting their relative strength. The warp should be the heaviest, strongest and most tightly twisted; the pile should be next in weight and the woof the lightest. If the warp is too light for the pile, it will break easily. The longer the pile the heavier the rug, consequently the warp should be proportionately heavy. The shorter the pile the shorter is the life of the rug.

No. 19. DAGHESTAN PRAYER RUG (Caucasian)

Do not reject a piece because the black or dark brown areas of wool are worn low, unless such areas are large. This condition is a proof of antiquity and makes the piece all the more valuable. Neither are meritorious old pieces to be discarded on account of a few imperfections, which can be beautifully restored by an expert repairer. Notice the weave, the number of knots to the square inch and the tightness of those knots. The greater the number of knots to the square inch the more expensive is the piece from the standpoint of labor put on it, but a rug with two hundred and fifty knots to the square inch will not necessarily wear better than one with one-fifth as many, providing the latter are well tied. Notice if the patterns are well drawn and show a proper balance, also if the color tones are harmonious with one another. Test the dyes. Shun faded pieces. Old vegetable-dyed rugs may have subdued colors but they are never dead in tone and the same color will prevail throughout the length of the pile, whereas in the chemically dyed product there is usually a great contrast in color on the surface and deep down next to the warp threads.



No. 20. KULAH PRAYER RUG (Turkish)

It is generally necessary nowadays when selecting a large rug to accept a washed piece, but when smaller rugs will meet the requirement it is wiser to choose the older, unwashed pieces, which as a rule are more beautiful and cost no more. The rugs which are particularly to be avoided are those the life of which has been greatly shortened by the artificial aging process. An examination of some of the higher priced rugs in which vegetable dyes are more likely to have been used will frequently enable one to better judge the dyes of the cheaper grades.

Having completed the examination and made your selection, do not buy without first having the rugs sent to your home for a few days on approval, where you can study them more leisurely and get an idea as to whether or not you would soon tire of the designs and colors.

In considering the cost of Eastern rugs it is best to recognize at the beginning the fact that desirable pieces cannot be bought for a song. Twenty-five or thirty years ago good rugs were abundant and proportionately cheap, but to-day they are scarce, so much so in fact that in many

No. 21. TABRIZ PRAYER RUG (Persian)
Tree of Life Design

stocks less than 10 per cent. of them are worth looking at. When we consider that the government duty on Oriental rugs is nearly 50 per cent., not to mention the various profits to be made, we wonder that they can even be bought at the current market prices.

The value of a rug depends upon the number of knots to the square inch, upon the quality of its material and dyes, upon the amount of detail in design, upon its age and its rarity. It is only the wealthy enthusiast who can afford the choice antiques. Upon them no fixed value can be placed, but the various kinds of modern rugs, good or bad, have something like a uniform value, according to size. There are being made in the Orient to-day many beautiful rugs in which the materials and workmanship are of the best. Many of these are as good as, and, in some instances, better than, the antiques from the same localities. The principal objection to them is that the colors are not so subdued and the sheen so pronounced as in the older pieces.

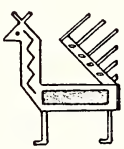
The cost of furnishing a room with such rugs depends—first, upon the use for which the room

is intended; second, upon the kind and amount of furniture which it contains, and, third, upon the size of rugs desired; thus, a bedroom with a bed, dresser, wash-stand, etc., will require much less floor covering than will a living room, reception room or hall, and where large rugs are desired, more floor covering is required than where small ones are used; besides, the former will usually average in cost more per square foot than will the latter. In bedrooms, where small rugs are always preferable, the average amount of floor covering required is from three-eighths to one-half of the floor space, while in most other rooms it is from one-half to five-eighths when small rugs are used and from five-eighths to three-fourths when one large rug is used.

Good rugs of medium sizes can be had from 85 cents to $1.25 per square foot, whereas those in carpet sizes cost from $1.70 to $2.50 per square foot. It can be readily seen, therefore, that to furnish a

bedroom fourteen by sixteen feet would cost from $72 to $140, while to furnish a living-room sixteen by twenty-six feet with small pieces would cost from $125 to $240, and with one large carpet from $400 to $600.

In the following section is given a list of some of the Oriental rugs which can be bought to-day at moderate prices. For the instruction and guidance of the reader, the number of knots to the square inch, the size, the prices per square foot and the individual characteristics are mentioned.



CHARACTERISTICS OF RUGS

CHARACTERISTICS OF RUGS

Thoroughly detailed information of the rugs mentioned in this book, as well as all others, is given in the author's "The Practical Book of Oriental Rugs."

PERSIAN

GOREVAN

Knots, 48 to 180; length 10 to 26 ft.; width 6 to 10 ft.; cost, $1.25 to $3.50. Excellent wearing qualities. Many of the modern ones are just as good as, and in some instances better than, the antiques. They seldom come in small sizes.

BIJAR

Knots, 48 to 120; length 6 to 18 ft.; width 3 to 14 ft.; cost, $1.00 to $4.00. Thick, heavy and durable.

MAHAL AND MUSKABAD

Knots, 30 to 112; length 10 to 20 ft.; width 8 to 15 ft.; cost, $1.00 to $3.00. Come in carpet sizes only. Mostly commercial. Watch for aniline dyes.

SHIRAZ

Knots, 42 to 196; length 4 to 12 ft.; width 3 to 8 ft.; cost, $1.25 to $3.00. Often crooked and too light to lie well.

KHORASAN

Knots, 80 to 375; length 5 to 25 ft.; width 3 to 18 ft.; cost, $1.50 to $3.50. Mostly carpet sizes. Soft, pliable and pleasant to tread on. Suitable for living and dining rooms.

TURKISH

KURDISTAN

Knots, 36 to 90; length 6 to 18 ft.; width 3 to 15 ft.; cost, 75c. to $3.00. Mostly medium sizes. Good wool, long nap, dark colors, good workmanship and splendid wearing qualities. As free as any from outside influences and one of the best rugs on the market for the money.

ANATOLIAN MATS

Knots, 36 to 150; length 1½ to 5 ft.; width 1 to 4 ft.; cost, $1.25 to $3.00. Serviceable, but vegetable-dyed ones are rather scarce.

No. 22. GHILEEM PORTRAIT RUG

BERGAMA

Knots, 60 to 180; length 4 to 8 ft.; width 2½ to 5 ft.; cost, $2.00 to $3.00. Good wool, long nap and nearly square in shape. Designs usually large for size of rug.

MOSUL

Knots, 36 to 80; length 4 to 20 ft.; width 2 to 4 ft.; cost, $1.00 to $2.00. No very large sizes. They are thick and lustrous, lie well and are among the best for service on the market.

CAUCASIAN

KABISTAN

Knots, 80 to 224; length 5 to 20 ft.; width 2½ to 5 ft.; cost, $1.00 to $3.00. No carpet sizes. Good weave, short nap and geometrical designs. Thin and flexible but lie well as a rule.

SHEMAKHA OR CASHMERE

Flat weave, 10 to 20 rows to the inch; length 4 to 12 ft.; width 3 to 7 ft.; cost, 75c. to $1.75. A pileless rug with designs similar to those of the Kabistan. Durable but lack animation. Good pieces in all sizes may be had at reasonable cost.

No. 23. KABISTAN RUG (Caucasian)

SHIRVAN

Knots, 30 to 108; length 5 to 20 ft.; width 3 to 6 ft.; cost, 50c. to $2.00. No carpet sizes. Often contain goats' hair. A small percentage of good pieces among those of modern make.

KARABAGH

Knots, 30 to 120; length 4 to 10 ft.; width 3 to 5 ft.; cost, 50c. to $1.50. Usually small sizes. Among the cheapest and poorest of the Caucasian fabrics, although an occasional good piece may be found.

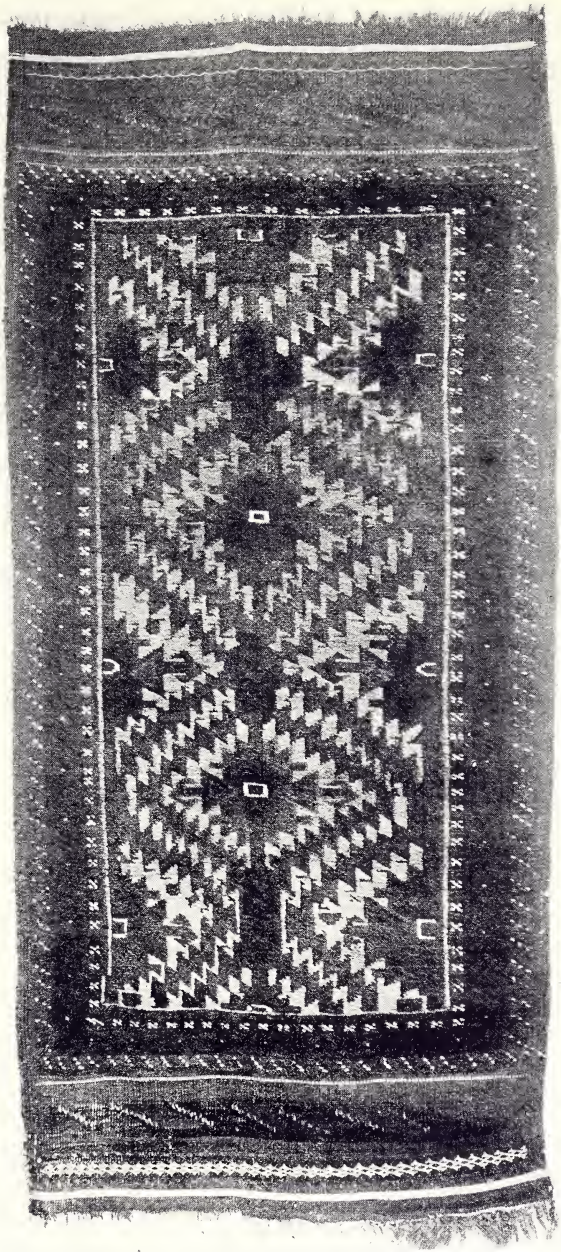
KAZAK

Knot, 36 to 120; length 5 to 8 ft.; width 3 to 6 ft.; cost, 75c. to $2.00. Geometrical designs and bright colors. Thick, heavy, soft and durable. One of the best Caucasian rugs to be found on the market to-day.

TURKOMAN

KHIVA BOKHARA OR AFGHAN

Knots, 48 to 96; length 6 to 12 ft.; width 4 to 9 ft.; cost, $1.25 to $2.00. Octagon design and dark red colors predominate. Mostly in carpet sizes. Contain considerable goats' hair, the odor of which may frequently be noticed in damp



No. 24. BELUCHISTAN RUG

weather. One of the best inexpensive rugs and, with the exception of the Yomud, is about the only antique left which comes in carpet sizes.

YOMUD BOKHARA

Knots, 50 to 180; length 5 to 20 ft.; width 4 to 10 ft.; cost, 75c. to $2.50. Few small pieces. Designs consist principally of octagon and diamond forms. This and the Khiva Bokhara are about the only two antiques in carpet size that are found in the market.

BELUCHISTAN

Knots, 30 to 120; length 3 to 11 ft.; width 5 to 8 ft.; cost, 75c. to $2.50. Usually in mats and medium sizes. One of the last to be affected by outside influences. Dyes are usually good, but of late few "undoctored" pieces are found.

No. 25. KAZAK RUG (Caucasian)
Palace Design

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

SYMBOLIC PERSIAN PRAYER RUG

No. 1, Page 15

Property of H. B. Claflin Co., New York City

Field represents a garden composed of various kinds of trees through which winds a path. In the foreground are two men and a woman performing a sword dance to the accompaniment of string music rendered by the two women under a spreading tree. A shepherd with his crook is defending a lone lamb from a wolf or dog. In the background is a serpent twined around a tree, a rabbit in the grass, and a deer and goat being chased by a wild animal. On either side of the mihrab is a tree on the lower branches of which is an ape hanging by one hand and teasing a lion by reaching down and tickling him with a branch which he holds in his other hand, while high up is perched a large bird resembling very much in shape the turkey and an animal resembling a panther. Above the mihrab is a crossed panel carrying an inscription in Arabic. The main border stripe is composed of a series of houses and tombs alternating in twos.

A SIXTEENTH CENTURY PERSIAN RUG

No. 2, Page 17

Property of the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts, New York City

Note the eight birds in the periphery of the central medallion, also the animals in pairs throughout the

field. They are leopards, tigers, cows, deer, and dogs interwoven with floral forms. In each corner of the field are fruit trees with birds in the branches. The main border stripe carries the celebrated Shah Abbas design.

CHINESE ZODIACAL RUG

No. 3, Page 19

Property of The Tiffany Studios, New York City

The zodiacal animals that guard the hours of the Chinese day and night appear in the main border of this rug, though they are not arranged in consecutive order, which is as follows:

One to three.....the ox
Three to five.....the tiger
Five to seven.....the hare
Seven to nine.....the dragon
Nine to eleven.....the serpent
Eleven to one.....the horse
One to three.....the goat
Three to five.....the monkey
Five to seven.....the cock
Seven to nine.....the dog
Nine to eleven.....the bear
Eleven to one.....the rat

In the central medallion chimerical lions and cubs are at play with balls. The corners of the cream-white field are marked off with delicately traced scrolls in blue. Upon the field itself many significant flowers, plants, and emblems are dexterously wrought in shades of blue with occasional

No. 26. SHIRAZ RUG (Persian)

touches of red and yellow. The inner border carries a succession of archaic geometric dragons which alternate with blue floral forms. (Owner's description.)

PERSIAN PRAYER RUG

No. 4, Page 21

Property of the late Mr. Benjamin Altman, New York City

This gem was made in North Persia about 1580. It is similar to one which was in the Yerkes sale and to another one which was shown at the recent Munich exhibition of Mohammedan art. It has beautiful floral designs with arabesques and Chinese motifs in deep shades of red, blue, and yellow, many of the designs being worked with light yellow or silver thread in the ghileem style. The mihrab is the Persian style, from which hangs a mosque lamp which is covered with red, yellow, and pink flowers on a green ground. The lower part of the field is covered with various floral and tree forms in yellow with pink blossoms. There are two border stripes. The inner one has a yellow ground, the lower part of which is covered with arabesques and the upper part with Arabic inscriptions in blue which read "May the Blessing of God rest upon them all. There is no God but Allah (the true God); Mohammed is the prophet of God. Ali is the saint of God. God the exalted one says: Verily God and His angels shower their blessings upon the prophet. Oh ye faithful send your blessings with Him, as well

No. 27. KABISTAN RUG (CAUCASIAN)

as offer your salutations unto Him." The outer border has a blue ground upon which are rounded octagons and oblong panels in gray, the latter containing inscriptions from the Koran in black. Size five feet five inches by three feet three inches.

PERSIAN SILK RUG

No. 5, Page 23

Property of H. B. Claflin Co., New York City

A symbolic piece of the Tabriz class. The foreground of the field represents a body of water in which lies the remains of a person who has been drowned. A diver has evidently been employed to go down and look for the body while the deceased's friends remain on shore with their camels, awaiting results. They are shaded by mythological trees bearing numerous kinds of fruits and flowers. Note the peculiar main border stripe of scrolls with alternating animals and peacocks.

SYMBOLIC KIRMAN RUG

No. 6, Page 25

Property of S. Telfeyan & Co., New York City

The field of the rug is covered with the Tree of Life, each branch of which supports a head of a different animal. It is supposed to represent the conflict between good and evil. The inscriptions are quite different from the Arabic usually employed by rug weavers and no one has been found who can interpret them. It would add greatly to the interest of the piece if some idea of their meaning could be had.

No. 28 FERAGHAN RUG (PERSIAN)

SHEMAKHA OR SUMAK HUNTING RUG

No. 7, Page 33

Property of Mr. A. U. Dilley, Boston, Mass.

A most unique and interesting piece. It depicts a hunting party which is composed of fifteen horses, seven camels and fifteen men. Find the fifteenth man and horse. Each hunter is holding a falcon and has two dogs. Note the different varieties of game scattered throughout the field; also observe that the camels' and horses' two eyes are both on one side of their heads.

KABISTAN RUG

No. 8, Page 35. Size 3′–7″ x 5′–5″

Property of Mrs. Thomas E. Matthews, Mt. Clemens, Michigan

A very unusual and attractive piece both in color and design. In the centre is a peculiarly shaped pole medallion and at each corner a quarter of an octagon, all in light salmon-pink upon a field of rich dark blue. The central octagon carries a dark brown figure upon a light blue field. At various parts are scattered swastikas, two of which are left-handed ones. The latter are seldom employed by rug weavers. It is quite unusual for a Caucasian piece to have but two border stripes.

No. 29. KURDISTAN RUG

CHINESE RUG

No. 9, Page 37. Size 5′–7″ x 2′–6″

Property of Dr. E. B. Guile, Utica, N. Y.

A rare Chinese rug of the 18th century. The entire ground of the rug is a subdued light golden-brown. The field is filled with characteristic Chinese designs. There is a central medallion with the "circle of happiness" made up of peonies, and ornate devices in terra cotta, blue, and white. The balance of the field bears dwarf trees in jardinieres, realistic pears and apples on blue plates, flowers in pots, and elaborate corner pieces wrought in blue, white and shades of salmon pink and terra cotta. Three borders, the inner in two shades of blue, relieved by dots of white; a main border of a Greek key effect in blue, brown and gold on salmon-pink ground; and an outer border displaying a diaper effect in pink and brown on the gold ground. Other devices in the field comprise a brush holder with pen rack, and ornate hanging lanterns. A choice weaving of great beauty and interest, and of undoubted antiquity. (Owner's description.)

INDIAN FLORAL PRAYER RUG

No. 10, Page 39

Owned by the Museum of Trades and Industry, Vienna, Austria

An all silk rug, the designs of which are exclusively floral with the exception of the half cypress tree on either side of the field and the four guard stripes

No. 30. MOSUL RUG (Turkish)

which carry the letter S. It is from the court factory of the Great Mogul and could go back to the 15th or 16th century. The centre is of a beautiful crimson spotted with numerous other colors, the upper corners are in old gold spotted green and red, the main border is dark green spotted red and brown and the half trees are in sage green.

PERSIAN SILK PRAYER RUG

No. 11, Page 47. Size 7′–4″ x 5′

Property of Mrs. F. C. Soule, Syracuse, N. Y.

A most attractive piece both in coloring and design. The tree of life bearing at least eight different kinds of fruit, and in its branches are found four different kinds of birds in pairs. Note also the cypress trees (emblems of immortality) on each side and at the bottom of the field.

ANATOLIAN PRAYER RUG

No. 12, Page 49. Size 3′–3″ x 5′–8″

Property of Mrs. Thomas E. Matthews, Mt. Clemens, Michigan.

A very unusual combination of designs and colors. This particular form of prayer niche is seldom seen. The field is of magenta with designs in light blue and green, while the main border stripe is in light blue with floral forms in yellow, magenta, red, black and white alternating.

CHILD'S PRAYER RUG (DAGHESTAN)

No. 13, Page 51. Size 2′–2″ x 2′

Property of Mr. K. Aleon, New York City

Prayer rugs of this size are exceedingly rare. This one must have been intended for a very small child. Note the hands in design on either side of the prayer niche.

MELES PRAYER RUG

No. 14, Page 53. Size 4′–5″ x 3′–6″

Property of Dr. E. B. Guile, Utica, N. Y.

An antique prayer rug, typical of Meles. Turkish knot, seven horizontal by ten vertical, making seventy knots to the square inch. The outer border, of terra cotta, blue and lavender single flowers on cream, enclosed by wide guard stripes in the Greek meander in red and lavender. The main border, on soft yellow, bears an ornate tripart floral device often seen in antique Ghiordes, but used more or less in other Asia Minor weaves. The flowers are laid in reds, violet and blue, the latter showing admirably the mottled effect so highly prized in antique Meles rugs. The inner border encloses the prayer field, and carries a waving vine in lavender, bearing red and cream flowers on a beautifully mottled blue ground. The prayer field is in a rich, warm terra cotta, the mihrab laterally indented, as is usual in Meles design, and exhibits conventional

floral motifs in yellow, blue, red and cream. The ivory space above the mihrab contains characteristic flower effects in reds and blues. All of the blues in this piece are mottled, and the coloring soft and beautiful throughout. No Meles can have more charming and harmonious color tone than this old gem, now well into its second century. The sides are finished with a four-cord red selvage, and the ends in medium red webs, the upper terminating in a braid-like heading, fringed. The warp is of two-strand yellow wool, while the woollen weft is dyed red. (Owner's description.)

MESHED PRAYER RUG

No. 15, Page 55. Size 4′ x 3′

Property of Mr. F. S. Hipes, Trinidad, Col.

Prayer rugs of this class are extremely rare. This is the only one I have ever seen. It is extremely fine in texture, having four hundred and forty-eight Senna knots to the square inch, tied so closely that it is quite difficult to separate the pile sufficiently to see the woof or warp threads. The central field consists of the tree of life in dark blue with red, blue and pink flowers upon a background of rich carmine.

The main border stripe carries the Herati design in dark red upon a pale blue ground on each side of which are narrow stripes of pink carrying alternate dots of red and blue.

BESHIR BOKHARA PRAYER RUG

No. 16, Page 57

Property of the Museum of Trades and Industry, Vienna, Austria

A 17th century piece with rather unattractive designs and quite unlike most rugs of the class. The latch hook, the letter S, rectilineal flowers and grotesque geometrical figures cover the field, while the single border stripe carries the meander or wave crest design.

TEKKE BOKHARA PRAYER RUG

No. 17, Page 59

Property of Miss Mary Reed, Syracuse, N. Y.

Invariably the central field of these rugs is divided into four sections forming a cross. For this reason they are generally termed "Khatchlie" by the Armenians, that being the word in their language which means cross.

KARABAGH PRAYER RUG

No. 18, Page 61

Property of the Author

The prayer field is filled with the rectilineal rendition of the pear design arranged with their stems all turned in the same direction, and around them is a frame of octagons which are quartered similar to the Turkoman octagons. The niche is typically Caucasian and within it is the date 1313 of the

Mohammedan year which is equivalent to 1896 of the Christian calendar. A rather unusual main border stripe on each side of which is a narrow stripe carrying the conventional trefoil.

DAGHESTAN PRAYER RUG

No. 19, Page 63. Size 3′–5″ x 4′–10″

Property of Mr. D. M. Edwards, Syracuse, N. Y.

This piece is typical of its class in every respect. The lattice field with each triangular space filled with a miniature tree form, the angular prayer niche and the Caucasian border designs are such as are found in the larger portion of Daghestan prayer rugs. Note the combs, ladders and gulab-ewers in that portion of the field above the prayer niche.

KULAH PRAYER RUG

No. 20, Page 65

Property of the Tiffany Studios, New York City

The highly ornate design in this antique rug has both Ghiordes and Kulah features. With the exception of the profile flower forms in the wide border the motifs in the design are formal rather than realistic. The field is surrounded by the typical curl border, a Kulah feature showing Rhodian influence, which strongly resembles a well-known design in Chinese rugs.

The field is of hay color and the decoration upon it and the space above it are of light blue. The ground of the main border is dark blue, and the

design is in shades of green, blue, red, ecru, and tan color. (Owner's description.)

TABRIZ PRAYER RUG

No. 21, Page 67

Property of Mr. George Bausch, Syracuse, N. Y.

The border stripes are typically Tabriz both in numbers and designs. The prayer field is filled with the tree of life motif with the most grotesque floral and leaf forms. The predominating color is chocolate.

GHILEEM PORTRAIT RUG

No. 22, Page 75

A pileless rug made by binding a dyed weft thread around the warp threads by means of a shuttle or needle, being alike on both sides and leaving open spaces between the warp threads where the changes of color are made.

These portrait rugs are not particularly attractive to the Occidental, but they are greatly prized by the Oriental and few are consequently seen in this country. In the Orient they are used for wall decorations the same as an oil or water colored portrait is used by us.

KABISTAN RUG

No. 23, Page 77. Size 4′–4″ x 6′–2″

Property of E. W. Edwards & Son, Syracuse, N. Y.

There is nothing unusual or especially attractive about this piece. It is reproduced here more especially to demonstrate that rugs of a fair grade can

still be bought at moderate cost. This rug has over twenty-six square feet and retailed at $32.00, about $1.23 a square foot.

BELUCHISTAN RUG

No. 24, Page 79. Size 3′ x 7′

A typical rug of the class both in designs and colors. The serrated diagonal medallions in the field are characteristically Beluchistan as is also the wide webbing at each end in which are worked designs in the ghileem stitch. Retail price was $15.00.

KAZAK RUG

No. 25, Page 81. Size 3′–7″ x 7′–5″

Property of E. W. Edwards & Son, Syracuse, N. Y.

A real antique with long lustrous nap and splendid dyes. The field is filled with four large geometrical medallions which are found only in rugs of this class. The border stripe carries the crab design. The retail price of this rug was $25.00, just about $1.00 per square foot.

SHIRAZ RUG

No. 26, Page 87. Size 4′–6″ x 7′

This field is filled with grotesque designs, each one of which is supported by two lance-shaped leaves. The three border stripes carrying alternate flower and bird forms are especially attractive. Unlike most rugs of its class it is entirely free of animal forms with the exception of one small bird at the left. The retail price was $30.00.

KABISTAN RUG

No. 27, Page 89. Size 4′ x 9′

A most attractive piece with its serrated, diamond-shaped medallions in dark blue upon a salmon background. Retail price $28.00.

FERAGHAN RUG

No. 28, Page 91. Size 8′ x 4′–3″

An antique of fair quality and attractive colors and designs. Retail price $40.00. A little over thirty-three square feet at about $1.21 a square foot.

KURDISTAN RUG

No. 29, Page 93. Size 6′ x 3′–9″. Cost $37.50

The predominating color of the field is dark blue, while that of the main border stripe is yellow. The designs are in subdued shades of old rose, light blue and red.

MOSUL RUG

No. 30, Page 95. Size 6′–4″ x 3′–10″

A very unusual design for this class of rugs, being more like the Persian than the Turkish products. The central serrated medallion and the periphery of the field carry the Herati design upon a blue field. The extremely narrow border is also foreign to the products of Mosul. This piece was found in the store of a Syrian and was marked $30.00.

746.7

AUTHOR G. Griffin Lewis

TITLE The Mystery of the Oriental Rug

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